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CITY OF LODI COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

AGENDATITLE: Receive a Presentation and Provide Comment Upon the ACE Service Expansion Study Central Valley Corridor, Merced-Stockton-Sacramento Preliminary Analysis

MEETING DATE: September 19, 2007

PREPARED BY: City Manager

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive presentation and offer comments as appropriate.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission has prepared a "white paper" titled ACE Service Expansion Study Central Valley Corridor, Merced - Stockton - Sacramento Preliminary Analysis. This white paper explores the feasibility of providing commuter rail service within the Central Valley ranging from Merced to Sacramento. The Rail Commission would like to update the Council on the commuter rail study. The executive summary of the white paper is attached.

Of specific interest to Lodi is the alignment of the commuter rail service. Four rail corridors are being studied with two rail alignments of interest to Lodi, the Union Pacific line (former Southern Pacific line) through downtown Lodi and the Union Pacific line (former Western Pacific line) west of Lodi.

On December 20, 2006, the City Council weighed in on the issue of the preferred corridor and adopted Resolution No 2006-228 requesting the use of the Downtown Lodi corridor. A copy of the adopted Resolution is attached.

The presentation to the Council is part of a two month effort to review the white paper with city councils in the area. Information received will help to guide the Rail Commission's next steps.

FISCAL IMPACT: None directly related to receiving the presentation. Unknown relative to the provision of commuter rail service.


Blair King, City Manager

Attachments

APPROVED: 
Blair King, City Manager

ACE SERVICE EXPANSION STUDY
CENTRAL VALLEY CORRIDOR, MERCED-STOCKTON-SACRAMENTO
PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
JULY, 2007



In 1998, the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRRRC) started the Altamont Commuter Express, more commonly known as ACE. The ACE rail service transports people from the Central Valley, through the Livermore Valley, to the Silicon Valley and back. Since its inception seven million people have taken advantage of this transportation option.

Building upon the success of the ACE commuter service and seeking to leverage some of the ACE investment to benefit other potential services, the

SJRRRC approved a study to explore providing commuter service within the Central Valley. To help identify the feasibility of providing commuter rail service, it is the Commission's goal to examine the prospects, possibilities and potential benefits of expanding the existing Altamont Commuter Express system from Merced through Stockton to Sacramento and vice-a-versa.

While the study is in a preliminary phase, SJRRRC feels it is important to provide the Advisory Committee and their respective organizations with an update on the progress of the commuter rail study.

Access to Existing Rail Lines.

It is not unusual in the Western United States for three (3) cities with a population of over 250,000, and a little over 100 miles apart to have either no rail lines or just one rail line connecting the three (3) metropolitan areas. However, the Merced/Modesto, Stockton, and Sacramento corridor is uniquely located with two (2) rail lines running the entire distance. These two (2) rail lines give the opportunity for four possible combinations of routings for commuter rail service. Those four possibilities for commuter rail service include:

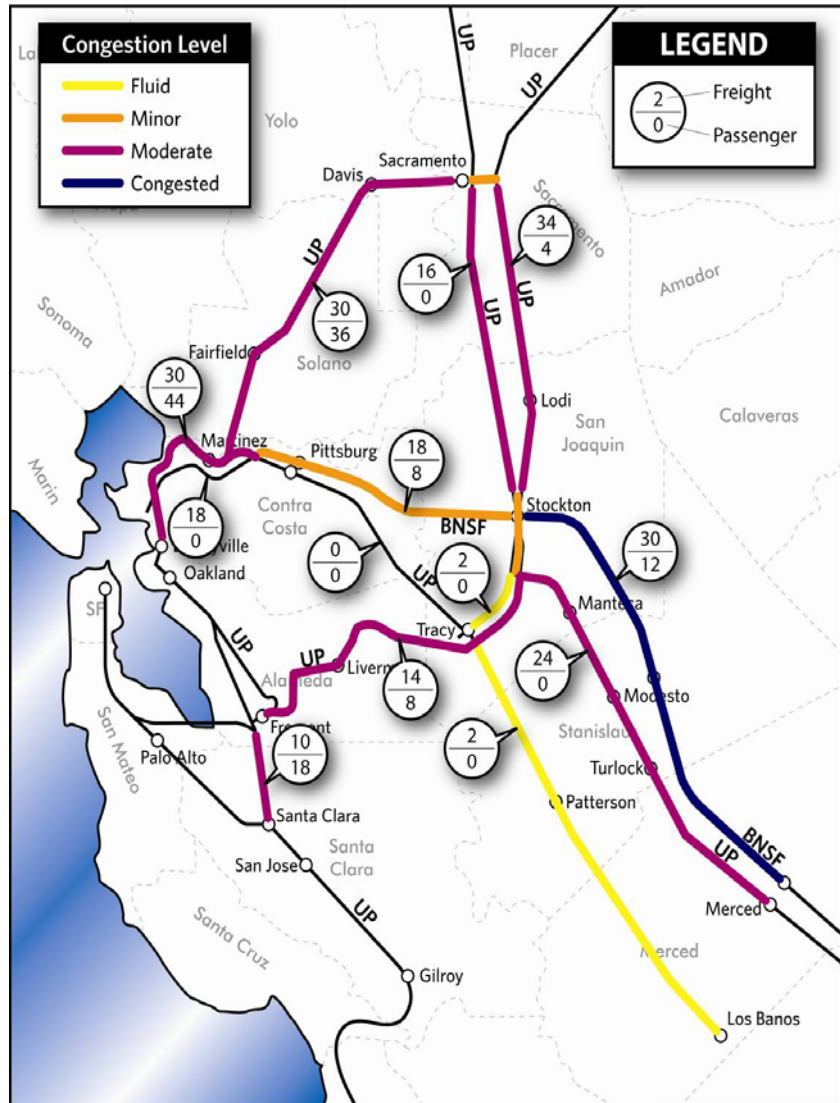
- Merced to Stockton on Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) track.
- Merced to Stockton on Union Pacific (UP) track.
- Stockton to Sacramento on former Southern Pacific (now UP) track.
- Stockton to Sacramento on former Western Pacific (now UP) track.

Beginning a new commuter rail service on any of these lines and/or pairings of lines has its own set of challenges and opportunities. Three of the lines have a significant amount of daily freight service. Two of them have some existing Amtrak Intercity passenger service (the “San Joaquin” service sponsored by Caltrans). The map shows the amount of freight traffic and commuter service currently on each section of the study area.

Obtaining access for operating a commuter rail service will require negotiating with either the Union Pacific (UP) and/or the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) who owns freight railroads. Critical elements in the negotiation will include:

- The willingness of the freight railroad to grant access.
- The cost of operating on the rail lines.
- The current level of utilization and congestion on the line.
- The freight railroad’s future prospects for growing the freight business on the line.
- The need for more capacity and the ability to add more capacity.
- Overall track and signal system condition and need for upgrade.

Each of these issues are being explored on all four (4) of these rail lines. **However, at the recent Advisory Committee meeting the elected officials and staff indicated the preferred alignment for the Central Valley Commuter service is the UP line running from Merced to Stockton and the UP (formerly SP) line running from Stockton to Sacramento.**



Level of Commuter Rail Service to be introduced.

The number of trains provided by a new service and when they are provided is obviously extremely important. If the new service is going to attract enough ridership to make it successful, it must provide the environmental and traffic mitigation benefits that are primary motivating factors in commuter service development.

Currently, simulated capabilities of the rail possibilities are being used to determine the optimum service levels that will need to be provided in order to attain the maximum possible ridership levels. While it is early in the study, we are anticipating that at least four (4) to six (6) trains in the peak direction in each weekday rush hour service period.

In addition, some level of midday service, will be necessary to make the new service attractive to potential riders. Midday service provides a “safety valve” factor for passengers (e.g., “what if I have to get home in the middle of the day?”) and leads to ridership growth in the peak period. The current ACE service takes advantage of providing midday service which has been very successful for the commuters.

Capacity Enhancements to the Rail Lines.

To support the introduction of new commuter rail service, capacity enhancements are foreseen on each of the rail lines under investigation. As presented at the last Advisory Committee meeting, preliminary estimates with the magnitude of additional capacity may be required include:

- **BNSF, Merced to Stockton:** as much as 12-15 miles of new main track which allows for double-tracking a significant portion of this heavily-utilized line.
- **UP, Merced to Stockton:** up to 17 miles of new and/or upgraded track and/or siding extensions. The line currently has seven (7) sidings, most of them are short, i.e., less than two (2) miles in length. In planning commuter rail service, sidings of less than three (3) miles in length are seldom usable for trains to “meet” if the objective is to have the meet occur while both trains remain on the move, or what is known as a “rolling meet”. This is much more preferable from a passenger’s viewpoint.
- **UP (former SP), Stockton to Sacramento:** perhaps as little as four (4) miles of new second main track.
- **UP (former WP), Stockton to Sacramento:** at least five miles of new track, primarily to extend shorter sidings.

These are very preliminary estimates of capital improvements that may be required. BNSF and UP may feel that additional capital improvements are necessary to allow for the introduction of new commuter rail service, while protecting their ability to provide both current and future levels of freight service.

Estimate of Capital Costs.

Estimates of capital costs for the capacity enhancements are being prepared focusing on construction costs for new tracks, and infrastructure. All costs will be identified on a unit cost basis. This will allow the stakeholders to know all the values utilized and will be able to calculate incremental cost estimates should the freight railroads insist upon additional improvements.

Potential Station Locations.

Recently in discussion with the Advisory Committee, potential station locations were identified on all four corridors. They were:

- **BNSF, Merced to Stockton:**

- Current Station
- Denair
- Eastern Ceres
- Northern Modesto
- Escalon
- Stockton



- **UP, Merced to Stockton:**

- Downtown Merced
 - Alternate site - Southern City Limits along Hwy 99
- Downtown Turlock
- Downtown Modesto
- Ripon
- Manteca
- Lathrop – Transfer to ACE Corridor
- Stockton

- **UP(former SP), Stockton to Sacramento:**

- Stockton
- Lodi
- Galt
- Elk Grove
- California State University, Sacramento (65th Street/University Light Rail Station).
- Downtown Sacramento (Sacramento Valley Station).

- **UP (former WP), Stockton to Sacramento:**

- Stockton
- North Stockton
- Western side of Lodi (Hwy 12)
- Thornton
- Elk Grove
- Southern Sacramento
- Sacramento City College (Light Rail Station)

Passenger Rail Equipment for the New Service.

The amount of passenger rail equipment (i.e., locomotives, coaches and control cars) required to provide the levels of service will need to be determined. The specific types of locomotives, coaches and control cars to be utilized in the new service will be based on the equipment currently in use in the existing ACE service, with improvements and upgrades as they become available to the commuter rail industry. Currently the SJRRC is currently evaluating bio-diesel locomotives for use in their fleet.



The basic assumption underlying this part of the study is that the new service will employ the same type of equipment as the existing ACE service, i.e., push-pull trains with four-axle locomotives providing head-end power to bi-level coaches and control cars. This same utilization of ACE equipment will allow an ease of maintenance and a lower cost of maintaining and operating.

Estimate of Operating Expense.

Operating expense estimates will be developed using the existing the ACE service as the model. One of the key assumptions will be that the new service will be “provided” on the same basis as the existing ACE service, i.e., a contractor will be selected to provide personnel and management for the operation of the trains and maintenance of the equipment. The contractor will provide O & M services under the terms of a “cost-plus” contract administered by the SJRRC. Infrastructure access, infrastructure maintenance and train dispatching will be provided at cost levels to be negotiated by the freight railroad owning the line over which the service is operated.

Estimates of Potential Ridership.

Estimates for potential ridership are currently being developed by the consultant. Commuter data from the various Councils of Government is being used to calculate the potential ridership. Within the next ten years, job centers will be built throughout the Central Valley requiring people to travel to and from work. Using the data from the Councils of Government and by surveying large employers, ridership potential will be identified.



Smart Growth Principles

As the Central Valley grows over the next 20 years, commuter rail service will play a key role moving people from home to work or school, and back home. Common goals of smart growth principals include the revitalization of the central cities, support and enhancement for public transit, and promoting walking and bicycling. For the most part, the central valley rail corridor is ideally located in the core of the cities, which is a key element of the smart growth principles.

Another significant opportunity is the educational system that exists along the Hwy 99 corridor. Starting in the South and going north, there is the University of California, Merced, California State University, Stanislaus, in Turlock, University of the Pacific in Stockton, and California State University, Sacramento. These educational institutions along with the several local Junior Colleges, makes this corridor unique in providing commuting alternatives to the automobile.

NEXT STEPS

Establishing successful commuter rail service requires a significant stakeholder's participation and capital investment. Listed below is a list of a few next steps:

- In order to develop a cost effective commuter rail service within the Central Valley, it is important to get stake holders feedback. During the next two months, we would appreciate the opportunity to provide a overview to the City Councils, Boards of Supervisor, Staffs, and appropriate organizations. Information from these meetings will then be brought back to the Advisory Committee to help provide direction to the SJRRC in September.
- The SJRRC Staff and Consultant team will continue to
 - Determine the potential ridership
 - Evaluate the estimated cost of operation
 - Continue our preliminary discussions with the railroad operators.
 - Develop a public relations element to keep stakeholders informed.



RESOLUTION NO. 2006-228

A RESOLUTION OF THE LODI CITY COUNCIL REQUESTING THE
SAN JOAQUIN REGIONAL RAIL COMMISSION TO UTILIZE THE
UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD THROUGH DOWNTOWN LODI FOR
THE MERCED TO SACRAMENTO COMMUTER RAIL SERVICE

WHEREAS, the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission (SJRR) is conducting a service expansion analysis for commuter rail service in San Joaquin and adjacent Counties; and

WHEREAS, one of the study corridors is from Merced to Sacramento through the Lodi area, with the ideal service hoped for is to provide three peak period round trips and one mid-day round trip. Two possible rail line routes that SJRR is looking at is the Union Pacific main line that runs through Downtown Lodi with the other being the former Western Pacific Line (now owned by Union Pacific) that runs to the west of Lodi in undeveloped areas; and

WHEREAS, it is critical that such a commuter rail corridor have its stations in populated urban areas to promote ridership and to provide incentives for transit oriented housing around the stations. Using a rail line with stations in undeveloped rural areas would promote sprawl and would impose a locational barrier resulting in lower ridership; and

WHEREAS, on November 21, 2006, SJRR presented a Shirtsleeve presentation of its service expansion analysis and discussed its methodology and project schedule, and it is important for viable ridership volumes for the rail line and stations to be located where the public can easily access and use the rail service. A Downtown Lodi station would utilize the multi-modal station and support the Downtown and Downtown Transit Oriented Residential Development.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Lodi City Council hereby request the SJRR to utilize the Union Pacific Railroad through Downtown Lodi for the Merced to Sacramento Commuter Rail Service.

Dated: December 20, 2006

I hereby certify that Resolution No. 2006-228 was passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Lodi in a regular meeting held December 20, 2006, by the following vote:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS - Hansen, Hitchcock, Katzakian, Mounce, and Mayor Johnson

NOES: COUNCIL MEMBERS - None

ABSENT: COUNCIL MEMBERS - None

ABSTAIN: COUNCIL MEMBERS - None


RANDI JOHL
City Clerk